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# THE SEWANEE REVIEW

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Vol. XXIII ]

OCTOBER, 1915

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[ No. 4

## THOMAS AQUINAS: DOCTOR AND SAINT

Early in the year 1271 the general chapter of the Order of St. Dominic granted a petition from the citizens of Naples, which was supported by the personal request of King Charles of Sicily, and sent to the beautiful southern city their most famous member, Brother Thomas. It was not the first time that he had entered Naples, but it was to be the last. His reception has been described as attaining the proportions of an enthusiastic ovation at the hands of a populace frantic with joy, and we may readily imagine the scene. All the elements of an effective picture are at hand: the charm of natural scenery, famous then as now, the bustling, turbulent town with narrow streets, the restless crowd of people of many nations, the rich variety of color in buildings and in costumes. Prince and peasant, courtier and crusader, bishop and monk could join with ardent interest in welcoming the guest, for noble blood flowed in his veins, and yet a vow of poverty made him a beneficiary of the poor; he had renounced the world, yet the world of his day knew no man that equalled him in influence. The most puissant cities of Christendom felt themselves honored by his presence. He had no gracious talents, no charm of person, no magnetic speech, no imperious will. Thomas Aquinas, who, if he had consented, might have been an archbishop, was but a teacher of theology. By sheer force of intellect and purity of soul he dominated among his fellows, and tumultuous Naples welcomed him with pride.

The influence of a great ecclesiastic or of a great statesman is usually the result of a long and varied experience among men of

affairs and in the public eye. Stirring events and dramatic situations discipline his powers and augment his reputation. The story of his life reveals the secret of his power and explains his rising fame, for his character and his talents develop their strength in the social and political and commercial life, whose contacts and conflicts he shares, and in whose progress his course may be traced. But it is not so with the scholar. His importance to the world comes always as a surprise after years of obscure toil. And so it was with St. Thomas Aquinas. Even judged by our more peaceful standards, there were few startling incidents in his career, and for the Middle Ages his life was singularly uneventful. The few facts of interest may be briefly recounted.

This illustrious churchman, later to be styled "Universal Doctor," "Angelic Doctor," and "Prince of Scholastics," was born, probably in 1227, in the castle of Rocco Secca, directly north of Aquino and about fifty miles northwest of Naples. His father was Count of Aquino and of more than local importance in middle Italy, while his mother was sprung from a distinguished Norman family in Sicily and was related to the emperors Henry VI and Frederick II and to the kings of Aragon, Castile, and France. At the tender age of five years he was sent, in accordance with the custom of the time, to the famous abbey of Monte Cassino, which was the chief of the Benedictine houses, that there he might receive his early education, for the monks had long been the school-teachers of Europe. The influences here were certainly not unmixed. The rule of St. Benedict was intended to develop self-mastery, detachment from affairs, and contemplation, and for this discipline young Thomas seemed by nature adapted. Seven years' experience of the internal life of such a community must have made a deep impression. Even then he is reported as having been continually asking "What is God?" But the contemplative life was subjected to serious disturbances and came finally to an abrupt conclusion. The abbey of Monte Cassino was an institution of no slight importance, and was forced to play an active or defensive part in the intrigues and conflicts between the Empire and the Holy See that had been going on for a long time with great uncertainty of issue. The meeting of armed bands in the

immediate neighborhood was not infrequent, and more than once the monastery itself was the prize of contention and was forcibly occupied by soldiers of Frederick or Gregory, until at last it was actually looted and the community scattered.

And now at twelve years of age Thomas, with well formed habits of study and devotion, and not without some glimpses of the world of passion and action, was transferred to a life of much greater vivacity and freedom that he might pursue his studies at the new university at Naples. This institution was too unimportant and inefficient to have been a great intellectual influence in the life of the lad who, as a man, was to play such a large part in the development of the universities of Europe and was to return here to close his brilliant career. Indeed, almost the only report we have of him at this period is the statement of Malvenda that the precocious youth not only was able to reproduce the lectures of his instructors (such oral repetition from memory being the educational method then employed), but could even surpass his teachers in accuracy and subtlety of expression; from which superiority, it appears, his fame spread abroad throughout the city. However much or little the university may have done for him, he could not have been unaffected by the life of Naples. For here was a country boy from a lonely monastery, somewhat stolid, indeed, in appearance and slow of movement and speech, but singularly sympathetic and impelled to think about all that he saw, placed suddenly and without the habitual restraints, in the city that was reputed to be the most beautiful and most wicked in Europe.

This passage from the comparative retirement of Monte Cassino to the pageantry of Neapolitan streets was but typical of European life in the period in which he lived. The ages of repose were gone. Men were no longer satisfied with maintaining old institutions, with repeating old devotions, and transmitting ancient learning. There was a renascence of life on every hand; there were new enthusiasms, new loyalties, new adventures; there were troubadours and crusades and universities. Everyone was excited to the point of restlessness and no one acted from a single simple motive. Even piety became in-

ventive. To meet the new conditions appeared St. Francis and St. Dominic, inspirers of fresh religious attitudes and purposes, making artless or ingenious appeals that caught the popular imagination and brought instantaneous popular response. The growth of the Mendicant Orders was inevitable. The older, conventual orders, even if they had not grown lethargic with excess of repose and increase of estates, were ill fitted by constitution, ideals, and traditions to serve the new age, while the secular clergy were notoriously incapable of spiritual leadership. In popular esteem and in genuine influence the monks were giving way to the friars. So, when Thomas came to Naples, he came immediately under the influence of Dominicans who lectured at the university, and by whom he was encouraged to seek admission to the order, and who clothed him with the habit of the Friars Preachers.

St. Dominic and those who shared in his counsels and later directed the operations of the friars who came to be known as his followers had from the very beginning aimed at a position of influence in the intellectual life of the time. They sought to wield the power of knowledge for the good of the Church. Always on the lookout for young men among the brothers who could be trained for service in such a cause, the leaders marked St. Thomas as one who gave special promise, and it was decided to furnish him superior opportunities of education and advancement. He was accordingly placed under the instruction of Albertus Magnus, himself a friar, a teacher in the Dominican school at Cologne, the most learned man of his generation, and for many years to be associated with St. Thomas, first as master, then as colleague, and finally, after the death of Aquinas, as loyal and loving champion. Apparently it was only the more mature minds of his superiors that discerned signs of genius in the awkward and taciturn youth, for his fellow students, of more jovial temperament and less solid attainments, styled him "the dumb ox of Sicily," to which Albert added, "one day his bellowing shall resound throughout the world." The few traditions that have come to us from his student days reveal him as silent, retiring, and without sense of humor, but with immense powers for acquiring and retaining erudition and unrivalled skill

in arranging, presenting, and defending his ideas. He soon became the intimate of his master whom he accompanied to Paris when Albert was transferred to that seat of life and learning in 1245. Three years later they both returned to Cologne where St. Thomas was made second professor and *magister studentium* at the age of twenty-one. There followed four years of quiet but productive labor, teaching, preaching, writing. At the end of this period of ripening it became clear that he was fitted for a part of the greatest eminence and he was ordered again to Paris, where for many years his life was identified with the university which was the most famous and important of all the mediæval universities, and in which he became the most illustrious doctor. In later years his services were required in many other centres of learning, but whether in Paris or Rome or Bologna or Naples, he continued his unparalleled career of splendid intellectual achievement, the foremost scholar of the world, and because of that, the most powerful individual, and yet the humblest of men, a simple brother of the order of St. Dominic. And this was the uneventful life of a young man, for his preëminence was uncontested when he was thirty-five years of age, and he did not live to be fifty.

The position of St. Thomas among his contemporaries is most striking, as will appear more clearly when we examine in detail his relation to the various intellectual movements of his day. But his importance was far from being a temporary one. The Council of Vienna in 1312 rendered a doctrinal decision in conformity with the teaching of the great doctor, and his canonization in 1323 established his reputation and vastly increased his influence among the less critical. By the middle of the fourteenth century his most complete work had supplanted Peter Lombard's *Book of Sentences* as the text-book of theology and he was recognized as the great master in the universities. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries his authority continued to increase until at the Council of Trent his *Summa* was laid beside the Sacred Scriptures, and in 1567 Pope Pius V proclaimed him a Doctor of the Universal Church. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries his influence waned, even among Catholics, but in the nineteenth it slowly revived and

was greatly stimulated by the encyclical of Leo XIII in 1879. Since that date the development has been so widespread and has resulted in so voluminous a literature as to merit separate treatment in the Catholic Encyclopædia under the title of Neo-Scholasticism.

There is a forbidding sound in the word "scholasticism." It seems to many to connote all that is dry and uninteresting in the intellectual history of the race, a phase of thought that was long since outgrown and discarded as useless and almost unreal. Unquestionably in the twentieth century, with its shallow enthusiasms and surface culture and intellectual vanity, the theologian has to endure a general contempt; if he is labelled as a mediævalist he arouses quiet amusement, like any other anachronism; while if he is defined more accurately as a scholastic he is ignored as one who must be dull. But surely life and thought were not dull in the twelfth century, nor yet in the thirteenth, and even scholastic theology was an exacting and exciting pursuit.

All the movements that culminated in the development of what has since been called scholasticism, and that drew to a centre in St. Thomas, emerge at once in a cursory study of the University of Paris. That university was itself a gradual development, to which Aquinas contributed largely, but which proceeded from obscure origins. In the early Middle Ages ordered education was conducted in schools that gathered in some cathedral close or cloistered abbey, and was adapted mainly to the training of the clergy. The curriculum of course included theology, but was based upon the seven Liberal Arts, which were divided into the elementary group, the Trivium, and the more advanced group, the Quadrivium. The latter included music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, but the superficial character of these studies as generally pursued is indicated by the fact that only enough astronomy was taught to enable the student to determine the date on which Easter might fall, and music hardly went beyond the practical mastery of plain-song. A more genuine mental training was secured by the Trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, or dialectic. The first two of these preserved a very limited acquaintance with classical writers,

although Church authorities frowned upon an excessive devotion to pagan literature and the hostile ideals of ancient culture. A much greater freedom was permitted in the study of logic, which became the controlling discipline in western schools. Fragments of Aristotle in translation stimulated and guided the thought of these centuries so far as formal procedure was concerned. Of course, the subjects that might be studied were determined by the ecclesiastical needs and interests. Only those facts and ideas were deemed worthy of notice which bore directly or indirectly upon the absorbing practical end of the salvation of the human soul. The Holy Scriptures naturally held the first place, after which came the decrees of councils and the writings of the Fathers. The greatest single intellectual force after Aristotle was St. Augustine, through whose writings Platonic conceptions secured a wide influence.

The rising intellectual life, which was one characteristic of the twelfth century, so fell in with the economic and political movements that resulted in the rapid growth of cities, and with the passing of educational control from the monks to the secular clergy, and with the rapid rise of the Mendicant Orders, as to give birth to the universities. The term "university," it may be needless to say, had originally no reference to the inclusiveness of the curriculum and the range of studies. It was used in the general sense of an association or guild of masters or students, and indicated their common interests and their mutual relations. For the reasons stated, students flocked in great numbers to Paris and attached themselves to the cathedral school, which was under the jurisdiction of the chancellor of Notre Dame, and an increase in number of students necessitated in turn a larger corps of teachers. It was the function of the chancellor to grant permission for masters to open schools near the church, but by papal decree he was required to grant such license to every properly qualified applicant. Gradually the masters formed a local guild for the protection of common rights and customs and soon saw that it was professionally necessary that they should determine who were qualified applicants for the *licentia docendi*. Contests arose with increasing frequency between the chancellor and the masters, with appeals to the King



or to the Pope, until at last the autonomy of the university of masters was practically secured. It probably existed as a genuine corporation with recognized statutes from the beginning of the thirteenth century. Meanwhile the internal organization proceeded by the separation of the masters, for the purpose of voting, into four "nations" and the selection of a "Rector" over the entire body. It should be borne in mind, however, that this organization was made up chiefly of the faculty of arts. The superior faculties of theology, law, and medicine were included in the university but were so few in numbers that they had only slight administrative influence.

It is nevertheless true that from the beginning at Paris the faculty of theology was, from an intellectual point of view, the controlling body. The study of medicine was never developed at Paris as it was at Salerno, and Bologna always maintained her early preëminence in civil and canon law. Other causes united to make theology the chief interest, and nearly all of the masters of arts were students in theology, and masters and scholars alike were regarded as clerks, even if not in minor orders, and enjoyed the immunity from civil jurisdiction that was the privilege of all ecclesiastics. How it was that theological interests could so thoroughly prevail in the sordid, licentious, and riotous life of the Latin Quarter puzzles us not a little, but it remains one of the paradoxes that give piquant charm to the age.

Another complicating feature of the university life was the presence there of the Mendicant Friars, both Franciscan and Dominican. The preaching Friars had their origin in Spain under the enthusiastic leadership of St. Dominic, who undertook a genuine crusade against the Albigenses and all other heretics. His weapon was not the sword but sound learning, and he began by training men to preach to the common people the essentials of the Christian religion, and later, as a matter of necessity, he sought to influence the springs of intellectual life at the educational centres. The rule of poverty, which St. Francis had made popular, was an addition to the original programme of the Dominicans, who in turn imbued the Minorites with their ambition for intellectual leadership. And so it came about that both orders were represented by houses at

Paris and by doctors in the faculty of theology. It was not without bitter opposition from the secular clergy, however, that they won a recognized place in the university; indeed, it was as the chief protagonist for the Mendicants before the Pope in a dispute regarding university rights that St. Thomas made his European reputation secure, for theological issues as well as ecclesiastical jealousies were involved in the controversy. It is a significant testimony to the genius of the man that the bad grace with which his opponents suffered his official connection with the university did not disturb the productiveness of his serene mind or weaken his influence in the world of thought.

Enough has been said of the organization of the University of Paris and of its external relations to enable us to realize that the position there which the great doctor occupied was one of commanding importance and wide influence. But how was that influence exercised? What were the problems of thought, the deeper interests, the vital issues of the time? It is to such questions that we must now turn as we try to trace some of the intellectual threads that are woven into the rich fabric of that wonderful century. We must, of course, never forget that that was, indeed, an age of faith. Behind all theories, incipient heresies, and scientific curiosity was the almost universal acceptance of the Christian creed. Authority was everywhere recognized and all men claimed to be orthodox. There seems to us to have been a lamentable failure in relating faith to practice, and the ideals and manners of men generally appear to have been but slightly moulded by principles of religion; but notwithstanding glaring inconsistencies between conduct and profession and a mingling of piety and savagery that shocks our modern sense, there was a more or less unhesitating assent to the doctrines of Christianity.

But in the twelfth century there had appeared indications of a growing independence of authority in the use of the developed logical method of study. Reasoning came to be a delight in itself and critical examination of accepted propositions was here and there introduced. It is not necessary to examine the causes of this originality or to trace the growth of the new movement. It is sufficient to notice the work and influence of its chief

representative, Peter Abelard. He was a man of brilliant parts and fascinating personality, surpassingly popular among the students who thronged his lectures, but an object of suspicion to ecclesiastical authorities. He had the defects of his qualities, being vain and supercilious, delighting in shocking more conventional minds. Devoid of the warmer qualities of devotional religion, he emphasized the importance of rational processes even to the extent of endangering the principle of authority which he could not or would not openly deny.

Abelard was the great exponent of dialectic, and whether he applied it to the logical problem of universals, or to morals, or to subjects more distinctly religious, he was moved by a genuine desire to know the truth as well as by the wish to discomfit his colleagues. "I was brought," he says, "to expound the very foundation of our faith by applying the analogies of human reason, and was led to compose for my pupils a theological treatise on the divine Unity and Trinity. They were calling for human and philosophical arguments, and insisting upon something intelligible, rather than mere words, saying that there had been more than enough of talk which the mind could not follow; that it was impossible to believe what was not understood in the first place; and that it was ridiculous for any one to set forth to others what neither he nor they could rationally conceive." Again he complains: "A new calumny against me have my rivals lately devised, because I write upon the dialectic art. Not only they say that this science does not prepare us for the Faith, but that it destroys faith by the implications of its arguments. But it is wonderful if I must not discuss what it is permitted them to read. All knowledge, which indeed comes from God alone and from His bounty, is good. Wherefore the study of every science should be conceded to be good, because that which is good comes from it." This, to our ears, sounds commonplace enough, but to his contemporaries it seemed dangerous and revolutionary, not merely because it was an innovation in scholastic procedure, but because it implied superiority of reason over faith and ultimately their separation. The critical examination of the Scriptures and the Fathers appeared irreverent, and perhaps with Abelard it was irreverent, for his

religion was apparently an ecclesiastical conformity, not a deep spiritual experience.

The opposite tendency is seen in St. Bernard, that prophet of love and damnation, preacher of crusades, and self-appointed censor of morals and beliefs. Bernard was a many-sided man, tender and impetuous, a devotee and a general and an adroit politician, but he distinctly was not a scholarly man, and Abelard's arrogance and audacity irritated him beyond all proper expression. He had no understanding of the excitement and joy of intellectual venture or of the imperious demands of critical scholarship, but he felt the clash of ideals and aims, and with a crusader's zeal he undertook to avenge the slighted Faith and defend the authority of God and the Church. "The faith of the righteous believes; it does not dispute," he says. "But that man, suspicious of God, has no mind to believe what his reason has not previously argued." "Peter Abelard is trying to make void the merit of Christian faith when he deems himself able by human reason to comprehend God altogether. He ascends to the heavens and descends even to the abyss! Nothing may hide from him in the depths of hell or in the heights above! The man is great in his own eyes—this scrutinizer of Majesty and fabricator of heresies." The differences between the two men were differences of temperament and point of view, of aims and methods, and as far as they themselves were concerned the issue was not doubtful. The gentle monk of Clairvaux was a fiery antagonist and the most powerful person in Europe. He set out to crush poor Abelard, and crush him he did, first with rhetoric and then with Pope and council.

But the future was with Abelard. No reactionary or obscurantist saint could put a stop to the new scholarship. The capture of Constantinople and the labors of many scholars, Christian, Jewish, and Arabian, resulted in distributing through Europe a vast amount of ancient learning, including the metaphysical works of Aristotle, who was known as "*the philosopher*." This flood of new learning with the increased intellectual activity that accompanied and followed it was a danger to Christianity, not only because of an excessive emphasis that was suddenly placed on intellectual achievements, but because

Aristotle was widely known through his Arabian commentator Averroës, whose interpretation was of a decidedly pantheistic character.

A very marvelous thing it was that with so little hesitation the friars sensed the situation, welcomed the new learning, took the lead in scholarship, used the instrument of dialectic, and united the two great cultural forces of criticism and faith, and then went on to produce the great monumental scholastic works that preserved for all time the inclusiveness and the balance of their wisdom. The men to whom may rightly be attributed this mighty synthesis were the Franciscan, St. Bonaventura, and the two Dominicans, Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas, and of these three the last named was the most eminent. Albertus was a man of tireless industry and wide intellectual interests and his work was encyclopædic in character. He gathered, translated, arranged, and transmitted the wealth of classical literature for which his generation thirsted, but he lacked the concentration and perspicuity of his scholar and companion. St. Bonaventura differed from Aquinas in temperament and in the emphasis that is determined by temperament. He was not lacking in critical ability, but he was more of a Platonist than an Aristotelian, a mystic among theologians, to whom virtue was superior to knowledge. There is in his writings more of the imagery of devotion and contemplation than of the analysis of thought.

St. Thomas was not without those qualities of mind that are usually designated as mystical; he contributed to the wealth of mediæval devotional poetry, and for him, as for others, contemplation could rise to ecstasy. And yet, as compared with his Franciscan colleague, his life and work were conspicuous for their highly intellectual character. The literary remains, by which we ourselves may judge, are numerous, for he is said to have left sixty distinct works, large and small. Some of these were but commentaries, in the prevailing fashion, on the Holy Scriptures, on Aristotle, and on the Lombard's *Sentences*. Others were the result of the classroom discussion of disputed questions in philosophy and theology. The most mature and important are his famous apologetic *Treatise on the Truth of the*

*Catholic Faith Against Unbelievers*, commonly known as *Contra Gentiles*, and his *magnum opus*, the *Summa Theologica*, which would alone support his great reputation. These are logical, metaphysical, and theological treatises and, naturally, are not light reading. The jaunty newspaper style, stimulating to a jaded imagination but destructive of patient thinking, which modern Pragmatists have introduced into metaphysical discussions, would have been most unsuited to the dignity of his high enterprise. And yet to one who takes delight in the operations of a clear and comprehensive and acute mind, there will be no inclination to call his writing dry, even though the subject-matter be thought uninteresting. Compared with the turgid compilations and commentaries and grotesque allegories of some of his predecessors, he was as Hyperion to a Satyr, and to read him after Hegel is like passing from the mists of the Rhone valley to the crystal clearness of the Gerner Grat. There is no lack of mystery, for he deals with the heights and depths of human experience, but the mystery is not due to the close fog of unintelligible words. He shows no tendency to make the complexity of life an excuse for confusion of thought. He worked, it is true, with the dull tool of mediæval Latin and within the unimaginative restraints of a formal logical procedure. And yet so comprehensive is his grasp, so sure his touch, so precise his technicality, so accurate his analysis, so confident and so unpretentious his manner, that one who does not succumb to the fatigue of the climb gains the reward of a magnificent panorama. The dryness is of the rarified air, not of the dusty highway.

The simplicity of his clearness is most deceptive and makes it difficult to give an adequate impression of his solidity and subtlety by a few illustrative excerpts from his writings. Equally futile would it be to give a bare outline of his masterpiece, while a detailed study of his system is here quite impossible. And yet a reference to some of his characteristic thoughts may give hints of his significance for his own time, and perhaps for ours. In the first place, the knowledge of God constitutes the beatitude of man and is of immense practical and speculative importance. He recognizes, indeed, that things

may be of interest in themselves and may be studied in their lower relations, but for him as philosopher and theologian their chief interest lies in their relation to God. In the second place, his use of the term "natural reason" marks the distinction, which his modern disciples have stressed, between scholastic philosophy and scholastic theology. The former is only one of the mediæval attempts thoroughly to understand the common racial experience; the latter is the explication of the Church's dogmatic teaching by means of the Aristotelian concepts and elaborate syllogistic reasoning. The distinction is a necessary one and yet it is noticeable that all the scholastic philosophers were orthodox churchmen, and the peculiar excellence of Aquinas consists in his so uniting the two phases of thought that their threatened separation was shown to be unnecessary. In the third place, it is evident that he felt confident of man's ability to come to the knowledge of the existence of God and to a limited knowledge of the nature of God quite apart from any authoritative revelation. But he took no short cut by way of the emotions; he insisted that man could think his way to God. He began frankly with sense perceptions, without which there can be no knowledge, and pointed out that the thought that begins there is incomplete until it attains to God. This intellectualism is displayed chiefly in working out causal relations. I am aware that the validity of the traditional arguments for the existence of God is supposed to have been destroyed by Kant's *Kritik*, but St. Thomas meant something deeper than is usually implied by causation; his argument was not from one event that was an effect to a prior event that was a cause in an endless regression that can only reach a First Cause after all by jumping; for him, rather, the intellectual process consists in discovering the cause *in* the effect, thinking the object, getting its meaning, idealizing it; detailed analysis leads to insight and comprehension; think anything hard enough and long enough and you will think God; he is Platonic as well as Aristotelian.

The intellectualism of St. Thomas showed itself in an exacting and thorough-going criticism after the best manner of Abelard. The novel method that the earlier philosopher had introduced with a too pugnacious temper in his famous *Sic et Non* was em-

ployed by the later with confidence and without offence. He did not shrink from formulating objections to ancient and even authoritative pronouncements, because he had no manner of doubt that reason and faith were harmonious and of mutual advantage. So far was this from being recognized previously that some venturesome thinkers had met a charge of heresy by maintaining that what was philosophically true might be theologically false. Such a plea was to St. Thomas intellectual disloyalty, for a double standard of truth was intolerable. He who in detailed arguments exhibited his critical acumen by analyzing confused statements and relentlessly exposing the fallacy of the ambiguous middle, pointing out repeatedly that language was used *dupliciter*, was quite as insistent that in the midst of subtle distinctions of thought the essential integrity of the mind must be maintained. The achievement of that unity of religion and scholarship is his most signal contribution to human culture.

Characteristically enough, his first step is a distinction that seems to be a concession fatal to his purpose. Some things, he asserts, are known by human reason and other things by divine revelation. Man discovers some truths through a laborious process of thought, but these truths are known only to philosophers, who seek them with patient application and hold them with much admixture of error. But the practical pursuit of the soul's salvation requires that all men should know, and with the greatest certitude, truths that exceed human reason. These truths are given by revelation, accepted on authority, and understood by supernatural illumination. They can be explained but not proved by reason; if they are not accepted on faith, the most that reason can do is to refute rational arguments against them.

But does this not lead to an *impasse*? Is not a rational faith, a critical religion, a manifest contradiction in terms? It does, indeed, appear so, and a long line of intellectual and spiritual tragedies seems to witness to the sad conclusion. But if there is a contradiction in St. Thomas it surely does not lie on the surface; he was too sincere an intellectualist to suddenly shut his eyes and find refuge in sheer credulity. The distinction between faith and reason is, for purposes of convenience in



speech, often stated, even by St. Thomas, in a superficial form, in which the antithesis seems without remedy. In matters of supreme intellectual importance a reference to external authority, whether it be to Greek and Latin Fathers, or to Scripture, or Church, or Christ Himself, involves such abnegation on the part of man's intellectual nature as to amount to self-stultification. But it is clear that St. Thomas never does, in reality, make such an appeal. The authority that he invokes is not, in the last analysis, external. His appeal lies from his own partial experience to his own richer experience, which is, indeed, not his alone, but his in a wide fellowship. Back of the ecclesiastical authorities, to whom he rendered humble and loyal obedience, behind conciliar and patristic authorities, was the real authority of the corporate Christian consciousness, which he shared and to which his personal experience made contribution.

When he says that some knowledge comes by the natural reason, he means that there is a racial experience, a conscious life that all men, as men, share, which begins with perception of the external world and rises to philosophy, which is man's effort to understand this life that all men live. When he says that other knowledge is given by grace, he means that in addition to that racial experience is a further experience, common to Christians, with a definite content which supplies new material for thought, the rational treatment of which is the science of theology. Technically, the characteristic Christian experience is called supernatural, the more general human experience is called natural, and the validity of the former is, to those who have it, just as great as of the latter. Obviously no amount of argument based upon the assumptions of the natural experience can establish the reality of the supernatural, but one who has the new sense of reality may reason about it, must reason about it, and the theologian may use the same dialectic that the philosopher uses. There is then no breach in the intellectual life; only an enlargement of it. Theology is the queen of the sciences, not because it uses a superior method, but because it deals with a richer content. The knowledge of God, which the metaphysician attains by natural reason only after the utmost labor and which he holds most insecurely, is the primal fact and

*sommmum bonum* of the higher life, which is still for St. Thomas preëminently intellectual.

Thus, in brief, did St. Thomas accomplish the great synthesis, turning the stream of new learning into the service of the Church and saving religion for a time from reactionary officialism on the one hand and uncritical mysticism on the other. Of course this was possible because of the almost universal assumptions of the age. Except for the Jewish and Arabian scholars, whose influence was waning in the thirteenth century, and some unintellectual heresies, there were no clearly developed schools of thought opposed to the orthodox Christian belief, and the great body of the people in western Europe, barbarous and superstitious though they may have been in many respects, nevertheless gave unhesitating, though often indifferent, assent to the Christian Faith, and, if we may judge by the great Gothic cathedrals, must have entered sympathetically into parts at least of the Christian experience.

It would indeed be a great mistake to regard St. Thomas in detachment from his time. He was truly one of the greatest fruits of his age, a cultural product as well as a guiding genius, and as such he is comparable to the other great creative men, to Dante and the cathedral builders. For St. Thomas was an artist, who worked with pure thought instead of blocks of stone, and raised a structure that seems at close view to be but a wall, solid and severe, devoid of ornamentation, but shows in the mass the coherence and delicacy that have repeatedly suggested the best French churches. So Mr. Henry Adams traces the parallelism with almost fanciful language: "The great theologians were also architects who undertook to build a Church Intellectual, corresponding bit by bit to the Church Administrative, both expressing—and expressed by the Church Architectural. . . . The immense structure rested on Aristotle and St. Augustine at the last, but as a work of art it stood alone, as though it had no antecedents. Then it reveals itself in its great mass and intelligence as a work of extraordinary genius; a system as admirably proportioned as any cathedral and as complete. . . . The spire justifies the church. In St. Thomas's church, man's free-will was the aspiration to God, and he treated it as the architects of

Chartres and Laon treated their famous *flèches*. The square foundation-tower, the expression of God's power in act,—His Creation,—rose to the level of the church façade as a part of the normal unity of God's energy; and then, suddenly, without show of effort, without break, without logical violence, became a many-sided, voluntary, vanishing human soul. . . . Every inch of material, up and down, from crypt to vault, from man to God, from the universe to the atom, had its task, giving support where support was needed, or weight where concentration was felt, but always with the condition of showing conspicuously to the eye the great lines which led to unity and the curves which controlled divergence; and this is true of St. Thomas's church as it is of Amiens Cathedral. The method was the same for both, and the result was an art marked by singular unity, which endured and served its purpose until man changed his attitude toward the universe. . . . Of all the elaborate symbolism which has been suggested for the Gothic cathedral, the most vital and most perfect may be that the slender *nerfure*, the springing motion of the broken arch, the leap downwards of the flying buttress, never let us forget that faith alone supports it, and that if faith fails Heaven is lost."

There is suggested in this passage something of the wealth of spiritual experience that lay behind the great mediæval creations and which must be sought if there is to be any thorough understanding of Aquinas. The success he achieved in giving intellectual unity to an age that was threatened with sharp division because of influences that appeared to be contradictory, may rightly enough be described as an artistic triumph, but is not thereby adequately explained. The formal unity of his works sprang from the unity of inner life. He was both doctor and saint; his religious life was intelligent, even critical of itself, and the confidence of his faith showed itself in the fearlessness with which he used his reason. His sanctity was greater than his scholarship and included it. Being a man of God, he did not despise the world or men whom God had made, but sought to understand them by the illumination that was given to him. He believed the world intelligible because he believed in God.

Both the success and the limitations of his work may be traced

to his personality. There was much of mediæval life and thought that seems not to have touched him, and so failed to influence his theology. He was given to contemplation and cared little for the human drama, nor yet was he an observer of external nature after the manner either of St. Francis or of Roger Bacon. We find no reflections upon the varied activities of contemporary life, no harmless gossip of the cloister and of the road, no light play of fancy, no sparkle of wit, no sense of humor. When St. Anselm lay upon his death-bed he said: "If God were willing that I should still abide with you until I have solved a question that I am turning over in my mind about the origin of the soul, I should be thankful; for I know not if anyone is likely to solve it after I am gone." But St. Thomas never could have said that either in vanity or in playfulness. Indeed he had so few of the common frailties and fascinations of men that he seems scarcely human, and his personality remains somewhat vague; if he had not been so great he would surely have been dull. And yet there was something in him that inspired in his contemporaries both affection and awe.

The direct causal relation between the practice of virtue and mental clarity is as elusive as it is indubitable. Even the effort to describe or illustrate the holiness of a saint ends in a caricature, for sanctity is more subtle than a perfume and it must be exaggerated before it can be analyzed, and exaggeration spoils it. The evidences of saintliness that most appealed to men of a former age only stir our sophisticated minds to ridicule. What care we for miracles wrought by a dead scholar's bones? Have not ecstasies and visions been proved to be illusions of disordered minds? And yet, hardened skeptics as we are, we sometimes catch the glory of a God-conquered soul, that something deeper than righteousness that shines through character and transforms it.

A biographer of St. Thomas describes him as a "quiet, meek young man," and yet a man of "changeless calmness and self-possession." "Partly through education," he says, "through the vicissitudes of life; greatly by character; partly through breadth of mind; and principally through grace—he possessed his soul in patience. It was never known, even under the most

trying provocation, that he lost his gentle self-control. His humility and sweetness came out strikingly when arguing in the schools. He answered meekly, and with benevolence." Corrado de Suessia, who knew him intimately, is quoted as testifying that he was "a man of holy life and honest conversation, peaceful, sober, humble, quiet, devout, contemplative, and chaste; so mortified that he cared not what he eat or what he put on. Every day he celebrated, with great devotion, or heard one or two masses; and except in times proper for repose, he was ever occupied in reading, writing, praying, or preaching. I saw him", says Corrado, "leading the above life." "His success," says another companion, "was not acquired by natural talent, but by the revelation and infusion of the Holy Gost, for he never set himself to write, without having first prayed and wept. When he was in doubt, he had recourse to prayer, and with tears he returned—instructed and enlightened in his uncertainty." Tocco, an early biographer, says that this was his daily prayer: "Grant me, I beseech Thee, O merciful God, ardently to desire, prudently to study, rightly to understand, and perfectly to fulfil that which is pleasing to Thee—to the praise and glory of Thy Name."

These are but glimpses of the inner life of him who is reported to have had an influence over young men that "far surpassed that of any other master." "He could," says Vaughan, "beyond other teachers, inflame the minds of his disciples with an ardent love of study. They were conscious that his teaching had something about it of another world; and the feeling crept over all, and finally mastered them, that he spoke as one 'having power.'" Especially characteristic is the scene that occurred shortly before his death, which is thus reported: "On Dec. 6, 1273, he laid aside his pen and would write no more. That day he experienced an unusually long ecstasy during Mass; what was revealed to him we can only surmise from his reply to Father Reginald, who urged him to continue his writings: 'I can do no more. Such secrets have been revealed to me that all I have written now appears to be of but little value.'" And so his great masterpiece was left unfinished, like some of the cathedrals, and his saintly soul, having mounted from foundation-stone to towering

spire, took to itself wings and soared into the heavens. But he left to posterity the monument of his genius, full proof of his rational faith.

In the Provincial Museum of Seville hangs a painting by Francisco de Zurberan, which has been called one of the noblest ceremonial pictures in Spain. Originally painted to be an altarpiece for the Church of the College of St. Thomas, it is a glorification of the saint. There are used in the composition six groups of figures on three levels. On the lowest level are represented on one side the archbishop who founded the institution, with his attendants of monastic type, facing the emperor with his courtiers opposite. Just above these and of larger size sit the four great doctors of the Church, St. Gregory, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome, as in the act of discussing some weighty problem of theology; while from among them rises the central figure of St. Thomas, the black and white habit of his order effectively contrasted with the glory of clouds behind and above, where appear, besides the countless heads of cherubs, figures representing at a distance St. Paul and St. Dominic and somewhat less distinctly the Virgin and the Christ. The beauty and the power of this picture, even when seen in a reproduction, is striking, and those who have seen the original with its rich contrasts and groupings of color, have been most deeply impressed. The various human interests that are represented on the canvas are harmoniously related to the central figure which dominates, not only by its size and position, but by its superior simplicity. He is one of the doctors; he can peruse and write learned tomes; he knows the keen enjoyment of intellectual disputation; but now, in their very companionship, his form is touched with aloofness, and with outspread book and quill suspended he stands with face expectant, almost rapt, as though he had caught the first glimpse of that Vision which was to him the goal of life. This is indeed the "Angelic Doctor," whose scholarship is inspired and ennobled by his sanctity.

I cannot rest content with this brief sketch of the character and influence of the great doctor and saint. He is as significant for our age as for his own, and a knowledge of his career suggests

what may be the satisfaction of present intellectual needs. To be sure, prayer and fasting and tears have no recognized place in modern pedagogical theory or practice, and university authorities do not seek, nor university students follow, the man who has ecstatic visions during Mass. The mere thought provokes a smile. Fashion, even in saints, has changed. Well, I, for one, am not sure that our pride is not our shame. It may be that St. Francis of Assisi was more potent to reform society than supermen and statistics and the big stick, and St. Thomas Aquinas may have something to say to modern culture.

The most striking characteristic of modern intellectual activity, when compared with that of previous ages, is that it ignores religion. I do not refer to the very recent transfer of educational control from clerics to laymen in Europe and America; that may very well turn out to be a good thing. Nor am I thinking of what may be called the secularization of the curricula of schools by omitting old-fashioned dogmatic instruction; that is an obvious necessity under present conditions. But what I do mean is that within and without the schools the modern mind does not greatly concern itself with religion. Fifty years ago, even twenty-five years ago, this was not the case, although the discussions then were largely controversial. But now the separation between criticism and faith seems to be accomplished, and surely with great disaster to both. The so-called warfare between science and theology has ended in a truce and each has been content to go its own way. It is a useless task to try rightly to apportion the blame for this cleavage in the culture of the time; clearly there has been fault on both sides: science has sometimes been irreverent and theology has frequently been timid or domineering, and both have been irritating and unsympathetic. But whatever may be our judgment as to the responsibility, there can be no question as to the fact of the divorce and its serious results in both directions. It is not suggested that either scholarship or religion is dying out; on the contrary there seems to be greater activity than ever in both departments of life; neither is it denied that many scholars are deeply religious, but in most cases their scholarship is not religious and their religion is not very intelligent. There are, of course, some

persons who contemplate this division of labor with composure because they feel that it is a victory for the mind, and are content that religion should continue for a time as a subjective emotional experience which is likely finally to die a languishing death. So Professor James joyfully cried: "We must bid a definitive good-bye to dogmatic theology."

But how is it possible for one who is genuinely interested in human culture to acquiesce in such a situation unless he is a whole-hearted rationalist and thoroughly irreligious? Of course if a man thinks religion is a vain superstition he must fight it relentlessly and at least prophesy its decay. But there is little in history or philosophy to warrant such an attitude: religion is evidently too universal and persistent a phase of human life to require defence. If then reason and faith are two ineradicable factors in the life of humanity, does it not show a failure of personal integrity and of general culture for us to permit them to develop in separation? The loss to religion is clear enough, especially among Protestants, who have boasted of intellectual freedom. The history of the last century is the record of their doctrinal discomfiture and the abandonment of one position after another under the attack, first of physical science, and then of literary and historical criticism, until the intellectual content of their message has almost disappeared and religion is being presented in a sentimental form, or a practical form, or, in mad reaction from a gross materialism, in a highly fantastic Gnosticism and other spiritual extravagances. Even if one should think that this shows a real development in religion because of the softening of manners and the spread of toleration, still it is an intellectual loss when the exact phrases and delicate distinctions of Calvinism are replaced by the vague and disorderly notions that many men now entertain, who frankly say that it matters not what a man believes if only he is sincere.

But there is a larger loss to the intellectual activity than this, and we are scarcely conscious of it. Theological explanations have given place to scientific explanations. Historical events are exhibited as resulting from geographical, economic, political and social causes and no reference is made to divine providence. Science pursues its patient and masterful career of research, but



cares nothing for the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. That there is very much of gain in all of this it would be folly to deny; that there has been any loss at all is what escapes our notice. But there is loss, intellectual loss and intellectual failure, because we still believe in the Creator, the Heavenly Father. To believe in Him and yet not think Him in relation to all our other thoughts is our great dereliction. If we do not attempt the synthesis, we virtually deny the validity of religious faith, or the efficiency of human reason, or the simplicity and unity of life; and on such denials no lasting civilization can be built.

The harmonizing of these discordant elements is, then, the great need of our age; the pressing demand is for a new unity of life and thought. In this quest we need not be discouraged by the apparent failure of scholasticism; quite the contrary. St. Thomas himself has gone long since to enjoy the closer vision of God, but the edifice he reared still stands, even in ruins, as a mighty silent witness of his achievement and a lasting challenge and stimulus to humanity, calling us, not to restore the old, but to build the new. The materials that we must use are more abundant and varied than those that lay at his hand, but the aim and spirit must be the same that moved his serene and venturesome soul. If a new leader shall appear he must come out of a new race of theologians, men of exact scholarship and saintly life, who know the thoughts of men and the mind of God. That in the providence of God they shall be raised up, who can doubt? But in their making there must be prayer and fasting and tears, chastity and poverty and obedience, and the great joy of believing.

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